

Americans. A foreign power, probably the one that is most in our face, Russia, is interfering in our elections. I don't care if it is Democratic elections, Republican elections, national elections, or local elections. When a foreign power interferes in our elections, that gnaws at the wellspring of our democracy. All of us should be giving the FBI space and encouragement to finish their investigation without delay or interference.

Instead, ever since Special Counsel Mueller was appointed, too many Republicans and too many in the right-wing media have been desperate to distract the Nation from his investigation.

First they waged an aggressive and coordinated—I would say shameful—attack on the integrity of the special counsel. I was in the gym this morning. I spoke to one of my senior Republican colleagues, who said he knew Mueller, and he knew what a fine man he was. He is a model public servant. He spent decades earning the trust and reverence of both parties. He was known as somebody who was a registered Republican through my years in Washington. He wasn't regarded as a partisan figure, somebody who would have vendettas, political or otherwise—no. It got so out of hand—I couldn't believe this—that a Republican Congressman suggested Special Counsel Mueller's investigation was a “coup,” on the floor of the House. That Congressman ought to go back and read his Constitution and read his history books. The rule of law is not a coup. I would say to that Republican Member of Congress: No person, not even the President, is above the law.

The political smear campaign has now bled into a spiraling and delusional attack on the FBI itself. The Republican majority on the House Intelligence Committee has, according to Representative SCHIFF, manufactured a secret memo of partisan talking points, full of innuendo and glaring omissions, intended to suggest widespread corruption at the Department of Justice and the FBI. They are very, very serious allegations, if they had any truth to them or backing. Adding to the impropriety, some of those same Republicans are now trying to release this slanderous memo—and that is what it is, a slanderous memo—to the public.

Since this investigation has started, our Nation has had to endure conspiracy after conspiracy from Republican Congressmen and Senators and, of course, from the rightwing press, which acts in total cahoots. There are conspiracies about “deep state” leaks and unmasking requests, phone taps at Trump Tower, Uranium One, who paid for the so-called Steele dossier, and today it is this memo. On and on and on, they are conspiracy theories with virtually no fact—paranoia, delusion. Why? Are they afraid of the truth of the Mueller investigation? It seems so.

Meanwhile, Republican Members of this body, I am ashamed to say, picked

up on casual texts sent between FBI agents to peddle the nonsense that there is a “secret society” at the Department of Justice, without a shred of evidence. I saw one of those—the Senator who was propagating this, this morning on television. It looked crazy. It looked delusional. It looked paranoid. What began as an attempt to discredit the investigator has now devolved into delusional, self-serving paranoia.

The Republican Party, which used to hold itself up as a law and order party, seems intent on destroying the credibility of our premier law and order agency and the hard-working men and women who serve there—all to assist a President who cares and knows very little about the boundaries of rule of law.

Imagine, the FBI, which for decades the Republican Party upheld—I remember lots of political debates here—now they are discrediting them with virtually no basis in fact. Guess who has joined the Republican campaign to attack the FBI. The Republican campaign to attack the FBI has been joined by the same forces that interfered in the 2016 election—Wikileaks, Julian Assange, and Russia.

Just a few years ago, those things were attacked by our Republican friends, particularly the hard right. Now they are joining them, wittingly or unwittingly. Can you imagine the outrage on the right if President Obama's message was being spread by Wikileaks, Julian Assange, or Kremlin sources?

Within hours of GOP lawmakers and FOX News calling for the release of the Nunes memo, Russian-linked bots began pushing the narrative using the hashtag “releasethememo”—Russian bots, hashtag “releasethememo.” Just a few hours after some of our Republican friends started this push, use of the hashtag spiked and was used 100 times more than any other hashtag by Kremlin-linked accounts.

We are witnessing an effort by the Russian Government to intervene and influence our democratic processes in real time. Every single American should be concerned by this, particularly when their elected officials are willing to work—wittingly or unwittingly—alongside Russia to manipulate our opinion. Some of our Republican colleagues—sadly, unfortunately, wittingly or unwittingly—are acting as allies of Russia's disinformation campaign. Can you imagine? Can you imagine? It is hard to make this stuff up, but it is real—hard-right Republicans and the Russians trying to discredit our premier law enforcement agency.

This country erected institutions like the FBI and the Department of Justice to defend the vital interests of the Nation without deference to political parties. Much like the Federal judiciary, they act as an essential check on political power—whosever power it is—a defense against creeping authoritarianism.

What the FBI is investigating right now is about shielding our democracy from the disinformation campaigns of foreign adversaries. Russia wants nothing more than to undermine our democracy by eroding people's faith in its institutions, for without resilient democratic institutions, there can be no democracy.

Make no mistake about it. Today Russia may be doing the same thing that a lot of our Republican colleagues are. Tomorrow they may be attacking our Republican colleagues. The Russians have no interests other than hurting America. So the Republican attacks on the credibility of the FBI and the Department of Justice are playing right into Putin's hands. They constitute an attack on democracy itself.

There has to be a line. There has to be a line where the interests of your political party stop, because to go any further would be to diminish our country. I say that to my colleagues here and in the House who have participated in this besmirching unfairly, paranoically, self-interestedly of the FBI. Peddling delusions of secret societies, “deep state” leaks, and coup d'etats cross the line of what anyone of any party should do. It has to stop.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

TAX REFORM

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, we have finally ended this government shutdown that was produced and directed by the Democrats in the Senate.

The reason Democrats decided to take this extreme step and shut down the government was because of the narrow issue of illegal immigration. They shut down services for citizens of the United States to provide services for people who are not citizens of the United States, and the Democrats have admitted it was all about this issue of illegal immigration.

There may have been another reason, as well, that Democrats wanted to shut down the government, and that was so they could change the subject being debated by people, talked about by friends, noticed by Americans, and making the headlines. That subject, of course, is the competence and optimism in the American economy—by workers, by people who are paying taxes, by people who realize how the Republican tax relief legislation is going to help improve their lives personally.

I think the success of the Republican tax relief bill scares a lot of Democrats. It scares them because every one of them voted against it. They didn't think it was a good idea to let people keep more of their hard-earned money. The Democrats thought it was a better idea for possibly the government to keep that money and use it and spend it in ways many people—certainly in Wyoming—feel is not a good use of that money. Families know how to get more value out of their dollars than the government ever will. Democrats voted

against it—the tax cuts that would actually create jobs all across the country, and we have seen that job creation occurring. They voted against the tax relief that is going to allow money to be brought back to America so investments are made in America.

It was so interesting to listen to NANCY PELOSI—the former Speaker of the House and now the minority leader in the House—refer to what we were doing in the Senate and in the House as Armageddon. She said it was the end of the world. That is what she said.

The American people, hard-working people, don't believe that at all. They believe it is good for them personally. It turns out that people who work at more than 200 companies in this country have already gotten a raise or some kind of a cash benefit or additional contribution to their retirement because of the tax law. That is why all those companies said they did it. Over 2 million people have obtained this benefit of the tax relief law, and more are going to benefit in the years ahead. Millions of Americans are going to start seeing more take-home pay in their paychecks next month. That is because of this tax relief law the Democrats—every one of them—opposed. We are seeing it not just with American families; we are seeing it with investments coming in from abroad.

This law has totally changed how we tax the money companies earn that sell things to people overseas. This chart goes through it. It used to be that when U.S. companies made money somewhere else; they paid taxes there. If they wanted to bring it back home, they had to pay taxes again, a double taxation. Very few countries do that, but the United States was one of them—double taxation. Businesses then had to make a decision, had to make a choice. It could bring money back home, pay taxes a second time, or keep the money overseas, invest it there, and not have to pay that second tax. A lot of companies, looking at the tax laws the United States had on the books previously, decided it was too much of a penalty to bring that money back home and invest it in the American economy. There was something like \$2.8 trillion in American business that American businesses had been holding in other countries.

We actually had a tax code that worked to the advantage of foreign countries, not to the advantage of the United States. It was locking money out, keeping it overseas, keeping it from helping American workers at home. That is a very backward way to look at how the Tax Code should work. We changed the law when Republicans voted to change the tax law, give taxpayers relief. Now the money gets taxed once, not twice. It changed the system in America the way most countries around the world do it. That means businesses no longer have this warped incentive to keep their money out of the United States. It makes it much easier for that money to come

back from overseas to the United States. It is good for America. It is what an America first economy looks like. It gets rid of this crazy Tax Code that we had, giving other countries an advantage—not anymore.

The second thing this tax relief law has done is actually cut taxes. When American businesses had to pay this second tax, the rates were very high—one of the highest in the world. It was adding insult to injury. Other countries have actually been cutting taxes for years—not the United States, not on our own companies in the United States. Here at home, we had one of the highest and most punitive taxes in the world. There wasn't a major country in the world where businesses paid as high a tax as we did in the United States. Washington was taxing companies about 35 percent if they tried to bring home some of the profits from overseas. Because of the tax law we passed and President Trump has signed, this rate has now dropped to 21 percent—from 35 percent to 21 percent.

Now our tax rates are actually below the average of other countries around the world. That puts American businesses at a significantly stronger position to compete around the world. It puts us at a competitive advantage. We got rid of the double taxation system—Republicans did—when we passed this law, and we cut tax rates significantly as well.

When you put these two things together—cutting the rates, making it easier to bring money back to the United States, eliminating this double taxation—it is a big help to American workers, to the men and women who work in America, as well as the businesses that employ those people. Businesses are much more likely now to invest in America, put their money back home, in American workers, in the American economy. We are seeing it already.

The tech company Apple recently announced it is increasing investments in U.S. operations. They said their total contribution to the American economy over the next 5 years will be \$350 billion. They are planning to bring home as much as \$250 billion in money that right now is parked overseas. They are talking about employing 20,000 more workers, hiring 20,000 more people. They have been letting that money sit overseas because of this system that locked the money out. Now, with the new tax law, it is going to be much easier to bring this money home and invest it in America.

It is not just Apple. We are seeing it with Fiat Chrysler, with Boeing, with AT&T, and with others. They are increasing investment in the United States and in the workers at home, and it is all because of the tax law the Republicans voted for, and every one of the Democrats voted against. It is no surprise that Democrats may have wanted to shut down the government to knock off the front page of the paper the headlines of the success of the tax

law and instead see reports about the Democrats shutting down the government.

It is interesting. There has been so much economic activity after this changed that other countries are beginning to become nervous. Other countries used to know they had the upper hand over the United States when it came to investments in the economy, and they figured the United States would never get its act together enough to change the tax laws to make us the competitive, thriving economy we know we can be. These countries knew the U.S. tax law was working in their favor—not anymore.

Countries like China, the United Kingdom, and Japan are considering changing their own taxes in response to what we have done. We are leading the way. They are trying to play catch-up with their economy. In Australia, as a matter of fact, they expect the loss of significant amounts of economic activity and growth to the United States because of the new tax law. Other countries are running scared because President Trump and Republicans in Congress are doing exactly what we promised the American people we would do. We are keeping our promises. We are putting American workers first. Tax relief is working. It is helping hard-working American families. It is creating economic growth. It is giving America the competitive edge we deserve because of the work we do, and we haven't had it in a long period of time.

Democrats said it would never happen, during the debate, on the tax law. First, they did everything they could to make sure we wouldn't get it passed—slowed it down, voted against it, talked against it. They were wrong, and now they know they were wrong. They have seen the money come back. They have seen the growth in the economy. They have seen the number of jobs created. They have seen the growth in wages. They are seeing people keeping more of their hard-earned dollars. They see people happier. They see a level of confidence and optimism that wasn't there in a previous administration.

The Democrats seem to be trying to change the subject by putting up a smokescreen—shutting down the government to avoid and try to deflect from the success the Republicans have allowed the American people to recognize in themselves because the tax laws have changed, and the American people will benefit from it for years to come.

It is time for the Democrats to give up the games, come to the table, join Republicans, and do what we know we need to do, which is put the American workers first. It is time for the Democrats to join the Republicans and work on behalf of all the American people who have sent all of us here in the first place, and we are seeing it now with the tax law and the tax relief and the tax cuts that are benefiting people all across this country.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

FOREIGN POLICY

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I come to the floor to reflect on the troubling foreign policy 1 year into President Donald Trump's administration.

A recent poll out from Gallup showed a dramatic reduction in global public opinion toward the United States. Confidence in the United States by the global community has plummeted to 30 percent under President Trump. A low public opinion of our great country, among other nations, is not a good thing, and it is not something to celebrate. In fact, it makes the world less safe for America and Americans. It limits our economic opportunities, and it undermines our ability to promote our values of portraying President Reagan's vision of a city on a hill. In just 1 year, the Trump administration has betrayed America's values, abandoned our allies, and appeased our enemies.

America's alliances, for example, with the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization keep our country safe and prosperous while they also build a more secure world, but President Trump has repeatedly questioned the worthiness of both organizations and has attacked leading members of each body—almost always key American allies.

These concerns were made much worse when, early in the administration, Secretary Tillerson said that America's interests would no longer be dictated by our values. It was almost unfathomable to hear the Nation's top diplomat speak in such a narrow, myopic way. Also, the games the administration has played with the mission statements of the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development have been clear attempts to depart from the values that define who we are—support for democracy, human rights, transparency, and good governance.

President Trump has praised strongmen leaders in Russia, China, Turkey, Egypt, and the Philippines even as they imprison, torture, or kill their own citizens. If support for world leaders who lack almost all of our values is not bad enough, President Trump's attacks on some of America's closest friends have undermined the credibility of America's word and America's commitment to its values. Launching verbal broadsides against the United Kingdom, Australia, and South Korea—the latter during the ongoing standoff with North Korea—are deeply regrettable and completely counterproductive.

Speaking of verbal mistakes, you cannot conduct high stakes diplomacy through the use of Twitter. We should never normalize such conduct by a President of the United States. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson conceded last week that he, essentially, learns about the President's foreign policy statements—or even of his positions—because his staff at Foggy Bottom prints off the President's tweets for him. That should give everyone a moment for pause.

Besides the nuclear crisis with North Korea, nowhere have the President's statements been more damaging than in the tenuous relationship between Washington and Moscow. Frankly, the President's words and actions send a clear signal to Mr. Putin that he can continue to attack democratic institutions and values with impunity. Each time Mr. Putin denies to Mr. Trump that the Kremlin was involved in attempting to influence the 2016 election—a bald-faced lie—the American President races to say that he believes him. Never before in history has such a clear threat to our national security been so clearly ignored by a President of the United States.

Last week, I released a report through the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that documented Mr. Putin's pattern of 20 years of attacks against democratic institutions in Europe. In order to best understand what he did here in the United States in 2016—a matter still under investigation—as well as to protect ourselves in 2018, 2020, and beyond, we need to understand the big picture and respond accordingly. We will never be fully protected or have a robust enough response with the President's repeated public appeasement of Mr. Putin.

We have seen again this week how that has been playing out in a matter that is being debated in Congress. The Russian Government continues to interfere in our political debates here in the United States. There are reports that Russian internet bots and trolls are working to support Congressman NUNES's efforts to produce and release a Republican staff report on the investigation into Russia's interference in our 2016 elections. We know that Russian bots and trolls are vigorously promoting these attacks and corroding our political institutions and norms of behavior, seeking to paralyze our government and undermine our democracy. This sort of behavior carries a possible grave risk to our democratic system and our very way of life.

I am not surprised to find that Russian services are attacking us, as a recent report that we released made it clear that it was part of their strategy, but I do hope that all of us—Democrats and Republicans—will stand up for our democratic institutions and speak out against Russia's interference in our political system.

The President refers to his foreign policy strategy as “America first.” “America first” is a risky and chaotic

proposition and will, certainly, lead to America alone. The Muslim ban, hastily handed down not 1 week into his administration, was the early defining moment of President Trump's tenure—the clearest sign yet he would actively work to denigrate our values and isolate us from the rest of the world.

President Trump's rhetoric has made a multifaceted conflict with China more likely at a time when we need to work with the Chinese on stronger diplomatic ties between our nations to improve regional stability in East Asia.

The President's decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris climate agreement—an accord that every nation on Earth is a member of and which the majority of the President's senior advisers recommended against—is a gross abdication of American leadership and a narrow-minded rejection of basic science and fact.

I and other Members of this body are engaged in an attempt to prevent the President from withdrawing without reason from another major international agreement—the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, otherwise known as the Iran nuclear deal. The President has jeopardized the agreement by not certifying Iran's compliance and without his producing any evidence that Iran is in violation of the agreement. He has now made a number of aggressive demands of Congress and of our European allies, once again demonstrating that he is no negotiator.

America first, supposedly, but as communities in Maryland and across the country struggle with a nationwide epidemic of opioids, heroin, and fentanyl overdoses, President Trump's budget has proposed a 27-percent reduction in America's global counter-narcotics efforts, which will directly weaken our ability to work with international partners to stem the illegal flow of drugs that are entering our country.

The President sought to slash \$1 billion from America's global efforts to fight HIV/AIDS in Africa, Asia, and elsewhere. Thanks to bipartisan American leadership, we have made enormous strides against this disease. We should not turn back from that progress. This kind of fear, insecurity, and even xenophobia are damaging our reputation abroad and corroding our core identity as Americans here at home.

The President has doubled down on the disastrous wall rhetoric and continues to belittle Mexico, one of our closest friends and partners in the world. Even the White House Chief of Staff's attempt to clean up the President's wall position ended embarrassingly for him.

President Trump's campaign to undermine American values resulted in slashing refugee resettlement into the United States, while asking other countries to do more. His policies damage our moral leadership, condone other countries' rejection of refugees on their borders, and strengthen the